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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DJIBOUTI 001529

SIPDIS

LONDON, PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHER

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TAGS: [CVIS](#) [DJ](#) [FR](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: FRENCH CONSUL DJIBOUTI WANTS TO EMULATE U.S. VISA ADJUDICATIONS PROCESS

Classified By: Andrea K. Lewis, Vice Consul
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (c)

1. (U) Summary. The French consul in Djibouti is very interested in the process by which AmEmbassy Djibouti adjudicates visas. The Consul states that the American process appears more selective. The French consulate is changing the adjudications process in Djibouti for Schengen (European Union) visas to emulate the American process. End summary.

2. (U) ConOff paid a courtesy call on the French consul in Djibouti, Marthe Meyrand. Meyrand received ConOff warmly, asking lots of questions about American embassy methods for processing visa applications. Meyrand is new in Djibouti, stating she has been in country about four months. She said she wanted to revamp the process of adjudicating visas at the French consulate. She stated she was less concerned about the danger of admitting potential terrorists, but would like to mitigate illegal immigration. She was moderately familiar with section 214(b) of U.S. law, assuming all visa Non-Immigrant Visa applicants to be intending immigrants unless adjudicating officer is convinced otherwise. She stated that she wished French law made the same assumption.

3. (U) ConOff was given a full tour of the French Consular office and introduced to all its members. One difference noted was that the French do not employ local staff in the consular section, as does the American Embassy; all employees are French citizens or dual nationals.

4. (U) Meyrand also asked about visa interviews. ConOff informed her that all applicants except certain exempt diplomats were required to appear in person for interviews. She seemed pleased by this response and informed that she had also recently implemented an interview policy for Schengen (European Union) visas issued in Djibouti.

5. (SBU) Comment: When the French interview policy was implemented, it was not widely publicized, and ConOff heard from sources that local people were caught off guard. Some anger was expressed; many Djiboutians consider it a right to go to France because of the historical colonization by the French, and the ongoing close ties between the countries since Djiboutian independence in 1977. Prior to the new interview system, individuals could drop their paperwork with the French Consul and pick up their visa three business days later. The interview system has been viewed as a statement of lack of trust. End comment.

6. (U) Meyrand also asked about the U.S. Embassy's appointments system for visa interviews. Due to low volume, AmEmbassy Djibouti does not require appointments, but takes walk-ins on specified days. This information is publicly available in Djibouti. Meyrand stated that a walk-in system would not work due to the significantly higher demand in Djibouti for French (now Schengen) visas than for American visas.

7. (SBU) Meyrand also raised the issue of name checks. ConOff was vague with answers, stating only that we do check applicant names with Washington. Meyrand expressed frustration with the name check system available to her, stating that while it checked names across all Schengen visa countries, returned hits did not provide any useful detail either about the individual in question or their offense.

8. (C) While Meyrand asked many questions, she also offered information about the French Consular system. ConOff was guarded with answers, and conscious of security issues. Meyrand was satisfied with vague answers and appeared pleased to accept publicly available information. She told ConOff that she is trying to model the French adjudication process after the American process. She stated that the U.S. seems far more selective in granting visas, and she would like to emulate that selectivity in granting Schengens in Djibouti by implementing as many of our processes as feasible into their system.

9. (C) Comment: ConOff was surprised by the level of implied autonomy exercised by the French Consul in Djibouti to redefine the visa adjudications process. Whether this autonomy exists in all French embassies is unknown. Also

surprising about the level of autonomy is that such decisions affect more than just France. Schengen visas allow bearers to enter any European Union country. Changing the adjudications process could affect all E.U. countries. End comment.

RAGSDALE